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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the premise that as computer assisted learning becomes more prevalent, teachers will be required to make decisions as to the quality of the software available for instruction. Assessment guidelines from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication Digest No. 79 and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction were used as a starting point, for discussions with three reading consultants, a Reading Recovery teacher trainer, and the coordinator for secondary reading. A 17-point checklist was then developed to be used as an instrument to assess software--a 4-point list presents additional factors to consider on an individual basis. The paper then provides the names and brief descriptions of the following software programs, along with relevant information (publisher, hardware requirements, positives, negatives, and "unknown"): "Little Planet Literacy: Glowbird and Ribbit Collection" (PreK-4); "Imagination Express" (Grades 1-6); "Ellis Intro.ESL" (Grades 7 and up); "English Express Deluxe.ESL" (Grades 7 and up); "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (Secondary Grades); "That Strange Mr. Poe" (Secondary Grades); "In My Own Voice: Multicultural Poets on Identity" (Secondary Grades); and "Writing for Readers" (Grades 3-12). A 5-item bibliography concludes the paper. (NKA)

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A Guideline for Assessing CD-ROM Software as Supplemental Material to Language Arts Instruction

by

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CS 216 515

A Guideline for Assessing CD-ROM Software as Supplemental Material to Language Arts Instruction

While computers are never expected to replace the role of the teacher in the classroom, they have become an integral component in the school environment. As computer assisted learning becomes more prevalent, teachers will be required to make decisions as to the quality of the software available for instruction. Using assessment guidelines from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English and Communication Digest #79 and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a starting point, I engaged in discussions with Robert King, Katherine Foster and Roselyn Daniels, reading consultants, Betsy Harrell, Reading Recovery teacher trainer and Dr. Dorothy Brown, secondary coordinator for reading. These conversations aided in producing the following checklist as an instrument that may be used to assess software. Additional factors to consider relating to individual situations are included at the end. All of the professionals involved agreed that there should be a component in the software allowing the teacher to individualize instruction and that the software should include assessment and management capability. Dr. Brown indicated teacher training was necessary for successful implementation of any computer assisted instruction.

1. Is the program grounded in research based instructional practices?
2. Does the program present a balanced representation of cultural, ethnic and racial groups?
3. Is the program developmentally appropriate for the target group?
4. Does the program incorporate both reading and writing components?
5. Is the program multisensory?
6. Does the program promote active student involvement encouraging critical thinking skills?
7. Is the program suitable for a wide range of learners and learning styles?
8. Does the program offer word recognition and/or vocabulary in a contextual framework?
9. Does the program include extension activities?
10. Does the program include a curriculum guide and/or teacher training component?
11. Does the program have a management and record keeping system?
12. Does the program include assessment features and, where appropriate, diagnostic features?
13. Is the program teacher controlled so that instruction may be individualized on an as needed basis?
14. Is the program user friendly?
15. Does the program have high quality audio and video components?
16. Are there instructions for installation and operation of the software?
17. Is there a toll free technical support phone number?

On an individual basis there are other factors to consider.

1. Is the program appropriate to the classroom instructional plan and system curriculum?
2. Is the hardware of available computers compatible with the software? (All software requires multimedia PC.)
3. Is the price of the software comparable to similar programs?
4. Most publishers provide CD-ROM demos at no charge from which many determinations about the software can be made.

Ten programs are described below using the above criteria. None of the programs have been viewed in their entirety therefore some assessments were determined by talking to the publisher directly.

Name and Brief Description	Publisher	Hardware Requirement	Positives	Negatives	Un-known
Little Planet Literacy: Glowbird and Ribbit Collection. ***PreK-4***. This anchored instruction was developed by Vanderbilt's cognitive psychology lab. Students use storyboard and oral and written literacy skills to create their own books. This was one of *Technology and Learning*'s Top 6 1996-97 software award. $495.00 for the complete collection.	Little Planet Publishing 5045 Hillsboro Rd. Nashville, Tn. 37215-3745 (800) 974- 2248 www.littleplanet.com	Mac/Win	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18		2(cartoon characters are animals)
Imagination Express. ***Grades 1-6.*** Limited only by their imaginations, students create stories, poems, reports and interactive electronic books. The program also includes a Dear Parents section. $69.95. Lab pacts, $169.95. (This program is available at Jim Cherry GLRS Resource Center.)	Edmark P. O. Box 3218 Redmond, WA. 98073-3218 (800)-426-0856 www.edmark.com	Mac/Win	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,11,13 (teacher can only manage, control and individual-lize by saving student work)14,15,16,17	8, 10 (teaching ideas are included but there is no guide or training component),	

Name and Brief Description	Publisher	Hardware Requirement	Positives	Negatives	Un-known
Ellis Intro.ESL. Grades 7 and up. Pragmatic beginning ESL program even appropriate for students illiterate in their native language. Audio can be slowed and learner can practice the language by seeing, hearing and speaking it as much as desired. Content-based material and assistance in more than 22 languages .$329.00 including activity kit with 3 CDs and printed books.	CALI, Inc. 734 E.Utah Valley Dr. Ste.200 American Fork, UT 84003 (888)-756-1570 www.cali.com	Mac/Win	2,3,5,8,10, 11,15,16,17	1(company states program based on 30 years of experience building ESL programs and input from numerous subject matter experts) 4 (no writing), 6 (program does integrate American culture through reading exercises only), 7, 9, 13,14	
English Express Deluxe. ESL. Grades 7 and up. This program offers modules in life skills, social and work situations and opportunities in writing and creative activities. Students can record, write and playback their own narration of comic strip. There is no native language assistance. 5 units with laser disc $6500.00, $4700.00 without laser disc. Up to $12000.00 depending on configuration.	Davidson & Associates, Inc. 19840 Pioneer Ave. Torrance, Ca. 90503 (800)-545-7677 www.education.com	Mac/Win	1,2,3,4,5, 6,7,8,9,10 (curriculum guide in-cludes lesson plans),11, 12 (assess-ment in teacher's guide but no diagnostic tool)13,14, 15,16,17		

Name and Brief Description	Publisher	Hardware Requirement	Positives	Negatives	Un-known
Adventures of Tom Sawyer. ***Secondary Grades.*** Students are offered four options: read the book; research the life and times of the author; view "Mississippi River Life"; and/or play comprehension games. There is a multitude of background information available and a "Slideshow Maker" allows students to combine text and pictures to create a multimedia presentation. It also features a thorough tutorial for a "Create-a-Composition" about the novel and this 12 step procedure may be the high point of the program. $39.95.	Southern Star Interactive 57 E. 11th St. N. Y., N. Y. 102110390 (800)-544-3356 **This publisher will allow schools to preview the program for 30 days if requested on school letterhead stationary.	Mac/Win	1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10(at an additional charge),12, 14(on most options), 15,16,17	11(no built in assessment, publisher states teacher can assess the composition)	13(publisher did not call back as promised)
That Strange Mr. Poe. ***Secondary Grades.*** Students, in an interactive environment, explore the life, work and era of Edgar Allen Poe. The first of three sections is "A Writers Life" which includes historical photographs, original artwork and audio narrative of written text. The other two sections, "The Literary Age" and "The Historical Age" are also in multimedia presentation. "The Works of Edgar Allen Poe", "Activities" and "Test Your Knowledge" are included. This program is beneficial to both American literature and 19th century history studies. $62.00.	Thomas S. Klise Co. P. O. Box 317 Waterford, CT 06385 (800)-937-0092	Mac/Win	1,3,5,8,10 (teacher's guide may be difficult to access) 11, 14 (see 10),15,17	2,4(no writing instruction), 6 ,7 (primarily a self-tutorial), 9, 13,16	

Name and Brief Description	Publisher	Hardware Requirement	Positives	Negatives	Un-known
In My Own Voice: Multicultural Poets on Identity. ***Secondary Grades.*** This program features poetry by nine contemporary writers in their own voice. Students take a "virtual" walk down 9th St. in Greenwich Village and are involved in an interactive anthology to explore their own poetic voice. The student can write and record, with prerecorded music and sounds, their own poetry. Instructional strategies are suggested with individual, small group and whole class. A word generator sparks personal interest but only the "Notepad", to keep personal notes, is printable. $89.95.	Sunburst Comm., Inc. P. O. Box 100 Pleasantville,NY 105709961 (800)-321-7511	MAC	1, 2(designed to explore the context of identity in a multi-cultural society), 3,4,5,6,9,10 (very compre-hensive), 13,14,15, 16,17	7(this is discovery learning), 8,11,12,	
Writing for Readers. ***Grades 3-12.*** High tech interactive writing activities focus on inspiring creativity while instructing writing fundamentals and the writing process. Novice writers discover the basic tenants of fiction writing using multiple prompts and can create characters by "morphing", or blending two visual images. Visual prompts include 64 photos, sketches and paintings. The "Comic Kiosk" encourages young and remedial writers. Portfolios may be saved and printed. $45.00.	Pierian Spring Software 5200 SW Macadam Ave. Suite 570 Portland, OR 97201 (800)-304-5248	MAC/Win	1,2,3(a wide range of age groups),5, 6,7,10,11, 13,14,15, 16,17	4(this is primarily creative writing instruction), 8(n/a), 9(n/a),12	

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